

A
A
000
821
043
7



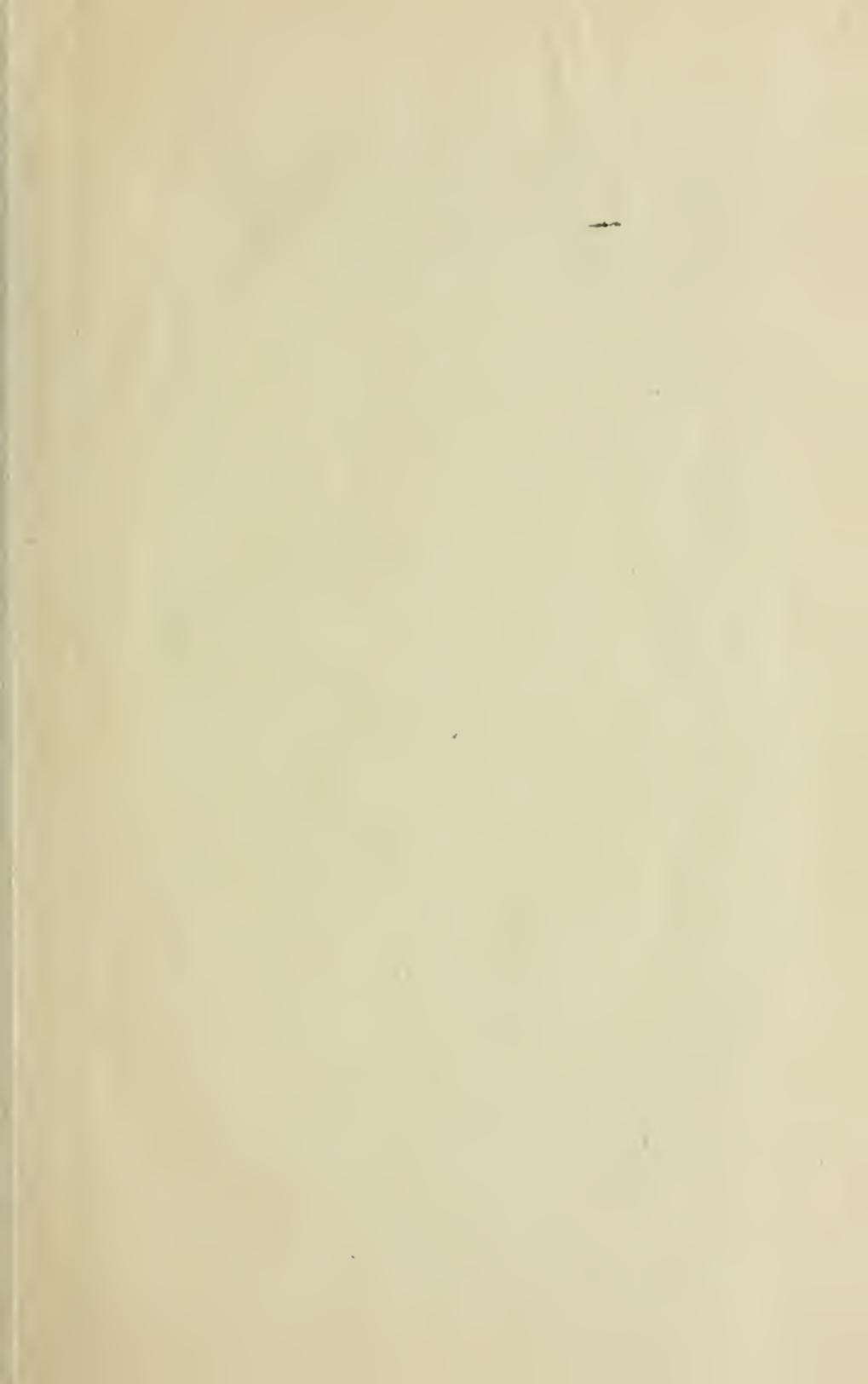
UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES



EX LIBRIS

ROBERT ERNEST COWAN



—

PUBLIC DUTIES of EDUCATED MEN An Address

Delivered by William F. Herrin
June the Fourteenth, Nineteen
Hundred and Ten, at Corvallis
Oregon, During the Quarter
Centennial Jubilee Exercises of
Oregon Agricultural College

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS
OF
WILLIAM F. HERRIN

AMAGHILIA TO MULLETT
23100 MA 201 ITA
1996-01-1

INDIAN LIBRARY, 1936

PUBLIC DUTIES OF EDUCATED MEN

President Kerr, Ladies and Gentlemen:

THIRTY-SEVEN years ago this month I received my degree from Corvallis College. Many since then are the changes that have come over the spirit of my dream. Nor have the passing years left untouched or unchanged our Alma Mater. Then she was encountering the struggles incident to the founding of a college in a pioneer country. Now, though still young, and with the promise of the years fair before her, she has won a recognized and enviable place among the colleges of the West. Thirty-seven years is no great stretch of time in the history of an institution, though in the measure and significance of man's life it may count for the greater part. As I stand here today the air seems vibrant with the echoes of half-forgotten yesterdays and the memories of my student life, with its hopes, its trials, and its joys. There comes, too, recollections of the sustained effort required to unlock the treasures of learning, and, when these had been in some part gained, the buoyant hope inspired by real conquest. Now, from the vantage ground of added years and an ampler experience, perhaps I am in a better position than those of you who are just on the threshold of life, to judge of the relative values of the things for which men strive. And it seems to me that the rewards of the scholar are more fruitful of real happiness, and make more for permanent satisfaction, than the rewards gained in ordinary business or professional pursuits, for the scholar deals with that learning which is the finer essence of our intellectual life, which "has been purified and sifted in quiet



rooms, to which passing fashions of thought do not penetrate." The pursuit of truth for its own sake brings us to know the human spirit in its unchanged and unchanging nature, to know the things which abide with us, and to reject that which is ephemeral and of only passing interest. In the words of President Wilson of Princeton University:

"The fountains of learning become the fountains of perpetual youth. At them are our minds renewed; at them do we drink of the pure waters undefiled, whose sources lie below all circumstance, all accident, all surface temperature or season. After we have tasted of them, much of the talk of the day seems like the mere lees of cheap wine of the vintage of yesterday. We are renewed by learning, in the sense that our minds are, as it were, brought back to the original and first bases of thought, to direct communion with all that is primitive and permanent, and beyond analysis and conjecture."

It is therefore with real pleasure that I find myself here today after the lapse of so many eventful years. And mingled with that pleasure is a sense of responsibility and genuine concern as to what I should say on this occasion that might be of value to you. Upon reflection it has seemed to me that I could not better employ this opportunity than to bring home to you, with such emphasis as I can, the truth of a conviction that has more and more gained upon me as the years have gone by. That conviction, briefly put, amounts to this: that upon the educated men and women of this country, and more especially upon the graduates of our colleges and universities, there devolve public duties and civic responsibilities which they may not, without proving recreant to their trust, either ignore or evade. Just what some of these special duties are, it will be the purpose of this address to indicate; but at the outset let me declare my wish to avoid, in what I have to say, any narrow controversial spirit, and to keep as closely as possible upon ground that is not debatable. At the same time I shall follow my convictions though they may seem to run counter to certain ideas advanced in the name of reform.

Never, in the history of our country, has there been greater need for intelligent public leadership than now; and it is my firm opinion that the college or university that makes no attempt to equip its students for such leadership, even though it may turn out competent engineers, expert chemists, and skilled lawyers, has failed signally to achieve one of the important ends for which it exists. Every student, no matter what his special "course" may be, whether it be civil or mechanical engineering, or biology, or the humanities—every student should receive instruction in what, for want of a better term, I shall call the philosophy of our political institutions. I would not be understood as implying that our colleges and universities do nothing toward this end. That would not be true. What I am pleading for is that this instruction shall not be limited, as it is at present, to a comparatively few students in institutional history, but that it should be made more general. I emphasize this point because I have seen so many otherwise intelligent men and women who, when it came to a question of grave public policy, were at the mercy of every political charlatan that appeared. Educated and estimable citizens, who could not be deceived for a moment by a quack who would offer them some patent nostrum as a cure for all the ills that flesh is heir to, will yet accept without question any political "cure-all" that may be offered them. Nowadays most educated people are rightly skeptical concerning short cuts to health, or short cuts to happiness, but offer them a short cut to political perfection and they become credulous almost to the point of superstition.

Now we cannot reasonably expect the great mass of the people to exercise critical judgment in matters in which they have not been trained, but surely the state has a right to expect that its educated men and women shall give it the benefit of their more mature judgment when matters of grave public import are being considered. An active and intelligent interest in public affairs is therefore a duty that one who has profited by a collegiate education cannot escape. Nor could any field



more interesting or more important challenge his attention. Glance for a moment at some of the interesting aspects presented by this subject. Thirty years ago, commerce between the states moved almost entirely without regulation, so far as the National Government was concerned. Now we have an elaborate code of laws enacted by the Congress of the United States, designed to regulate our interstate commerce and the corporations and individuals engaged therein. Similar laws have been and are being enacted by the different states to govern their local concerns. The government of our cities and municipalities has given rise to many vexed questions, which are still unsettled; the laws governing the elective franchise have undergone and have yet to undergo many important changes. Upon all these subjects, and many others closely affecting the individual citizen, our laws may be said to be in a formative period, and the questions raised are vital and far-reaching and have necessarily provoked and are provoking much public discussion. We may sum up all this agitation and discussion as an effort to better our government and to remove the evils which have arisen under the laws heretofore existing. No good citizen can fail to be interested in these questions, and I think no one will take issue with me when I say that one of the highest duties resting upon the citizen is to take an active interest in the politics of his country, to do his utmost to secure the best government possible, and especially to oppose any innovations or tendencies which may be inconsistent with the principles of representative government upon which its stability and permanency must ultimately depend.

In its last analysis our government is essentially a government based upon and controlled by public opinion. It follows, therefore, that:

"In proportion as public opinion is wise and enlightened, the government will be enlightened and wise. In other words, the people will always have as good a government as their intelligence and patriotism deserve, and no better. In the long

run, government can be made better only by the improvement of the public opinion upon which it rests."

In his *American Commonwealth*, Mr. Bryce devotes much space to the consideration of public opinion, its nature, its growth, and its influence in the evolution of government. In speaking of the national characteristics of our people, he says:

"The Americans are at bottom a conservative people, in virtue both of the deep instinct of their race and of that practical shrewdness which recognizes the value of permanence and solidity in institutions. They are conservative in their fundamental beliefs, in the structure of their governments, in their social and domestic usages. They are like a tree whose pendulous shoots quiver and rustle with the slightest breeze, while its roots enfold the rock with a grasp which storms cannot loosen."

Mr. Bryce here strikes the keynote of the American character and indicates the sources of that public opinion which has thus far controlled the destinies of our nation. It was this conservatism which molded and produced the American Constitution, which has construed its provisions and formulated the laws which have been enacted and enforced since its creation. To this conservatism, more than to anything else, Mr. Bryce points out, is due the stability of our government and its institutions and the success which our people have achieved in self-government. It is interesting, therefore, to consider for a moment whether we are in danger of losing this conservatism, whether there are tendencies in present-day legislation, or in reforms recently proposed, which may carry us from our moorings to new and strange seas of political experiment, and expose us perhaps to danger of national shipwreck.

As ours is a government controlled by public opinion, it is important to inquire what that opinion is, and how it is formed. Much has been written about public opinion as a governmental and political force, yet we have no generally accepted definition of the term; in fact, it is a thing most elusive and most difficult

to define, resembling in this respect some of the great facts and problems of human existence with which we constantly deal, as well as some of the natural forces with which physics is concerned. If we will but reflect a moment, however, we will see that it is the great things of existence that most persistently elude analysis or even description. Who, for instance, has ever given us an adequate definition of life? Yet, almost since the dawn of history, this problem has engaged the most profound intellects, and today we are no nearer the solution than we were centuries ago. But the fact that we cannot adequately define life does not make it any the less worth living. And so it is with the phenomena that lie at the threshold of emotional and of religious experience, and with the secret of human personality, and with what we call the national spirit, or the moving impulses of a people. All these are important forces in human life and determining factors in human development, yet they elude definition. In the sphere of physical science we have like difficulties. Who, for example, has ever satisfactorily defined electricity? Yet that does not prevent us from using electricity nor from recognizing it as one of the greatest physical forces at the disposition of man.

Therefore, though we find it difficult or even impossible adequately to define public opinion, that need not blind us to its importance nor to the tremendous part it plays and has always played in shaping our institutions and in determining the form of our government. Though we may not say precisely what public opinion is, I think we can say with some degree of positiveness what it is not. It is not, and never was, what is said or done by the frenzied mob, and whether the mob is a small isolated group of men acting under the stress of great excitement, or is an entire community in the passing grip of the mob-spirit, our conclusion must be the same: that what is done or prompted by the mob-spirit can in no proper sense of the term be said to be a manifestation of public opinion. We may then say that public opinion is the opposite of the spirit which controls the mob or goes with any excitable, passionate

action. I would say that the true public opinion of a people is and must be the result of their serious, deliberate thought. Therefore, public opinion, in the sense in which I use the term, *is the deliberate and reasoned judgment* of the community.

It is a curious but significant fact that our newspapers rarely invoke public opinion except in times of public excitement. They then speak of "public sentiment being fully aroused," or of "public opinion demanding" this or that. They apparently assume that public opinion—the deliberate, reasoned judgment of a community—manifests itself most unmistakably at times of great public excitement. Public passion may show itself at such times, public caprice, public prejudice, perhaps, but not public opinion in the true meaning of that term. We must constantly bear in mind the great difference between public opinion and public clamor, the former a deliberate and reasoned judgment giving expression to the sober second thought of a law-abiding community, the latter a momentary or temporary ebullition of passion or excitement, hysterical rather than rational—the one constructive and making for the best and highest interests of the community, the other essentially destructive and transitory, and almost always at variance with the forces that make for permanence and stability.

Obviously, then, the formation and growth of public opinion, of this force so impalpable yet so powerful for good or evil, becomes a matter of grave national importance. People sometimes mistakenly imagine that public opinion is something different from the collective opinion of the individuals who compose the public; they seem to think that they have but little part in its formation and direction, and that the only way to ascertain what it is, is to accept what the newspapers say about it. Now this passive attitude of the people in regard to the creation and direction of public opinion often leads to their being deceived as to what it really is, and sometimes permits a small but clamorous minority temporarily to foist its views and policies upon the community.

As a matter of fact, the formation and growth of public opinion is an intricate and complicated process. Not only is it difficult at any particular moment to ascertain what it is, but it is slow in manifesting itself. Now this slowness in manifesting itself, far from being a drawback, is a decided advantage. On this point I cannot do better than to quote again from Mr. Bryce:

"We must remember," says the author of the *American Commonwealth*, "how much is gained as well as lost by the slow and hesitating working of public opinion in the United States. So tremendous a force would be dangerous if it moved rashly. Acting over and gathered from an enormous area, in which there exist many local differences, it needs time, often a long time, to become conscious of the preponderance of one set of tendencies over another. The elements both of local difference and of class difference must be, so to speak, well shaken up together, and each part brought into contact with the rest, before the mixed liquid can produce a precipitate in the form of a practical conclusion."

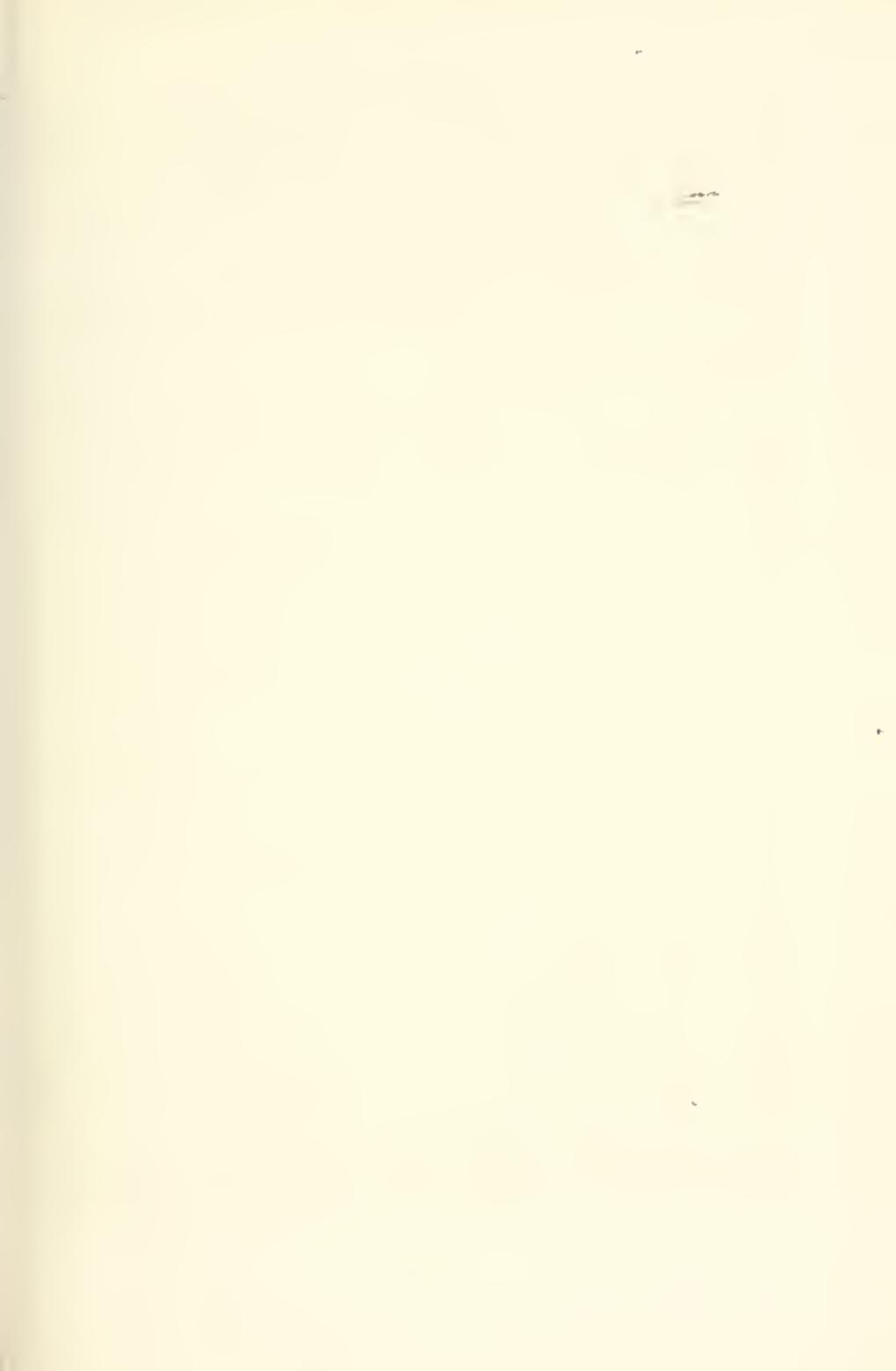
Bearing this point in mind, I would have you notice how wisely planned our political machinery is for giving expression to true public opinion, and for preventing public excitement from working the mischief it might otherwise produce. It is not my purpose to review the entire system of checks and balances which is so noteworthy a feature of our system of government, but to direct your attention to the wisdom of having our elections occur at definitely fixed and stated intervals, and of having the tenure of office of our public officials determined by law. I take up this aspect of my subject rather than another because so many of the short cuts to political perfection would in a short time nullify these advantages which make so directly for the stability and permanence of our government.

One of the advantages of having our elections come at fixed and stated intervals is, to quote the words of President Taft, used in a slightly different connection:

"To impose obstructions to sudden emotional movements of the people, not taken with the deliberation necessary to secure wisdom; movements that ought to be delayed and held up until they could pass not only under the observation of Philip drunk, but of Philip sober."

In other words, our elections coming at fixed intervals, preceded as they are by campaigns of education and instruction, makes it possible for public opinion to crystallize and to separate itself from the hastily formed and ill-considered judgments incident to the heat and excitement of nominating conventions.

It is easy, therefore, to understand that if our elections were not held at stated times fixed by law, but were held instead at indefinite times, according to contingencies which might arise, the result of such elections might easily turn upon the temporary excitement and passions of the people, and it might be impossible in many cases to have a sufficiently long campaign of education by which might be secured the cool, deliberate judgment of the people, freed from passions and prejudice which often exist temporarily and which for the time exercise a controlling influence. It has frequently occurred in our national elections that public sentiment at the beginning of a campaign, before the questions at issue have been discussed, was strongly opposed to the verdict given after thorough discussion, and I suppose that no one would contend that the judgment of the people, formed after thorough consideration, should not be preferred to a judgment given without such consideration, or after only a partial or limited consideration. And I submit that our system of a fixed tenure of office, and of elections held at stated times, is far superior as a means of forming and reaching a sound public opinion than is the English system where a vote in Parliament adverse to the government may precipitate a general election at a time when the public mind is exercised by great passion or excitement—a condition certainly not conducive to a sober or even patriotic judgment. There is no one of us who would not mistrust his own judgment formed in passion or excitement. The wise man



always sleeps before making up his mind on important matters, and when the whole people, or a community, are to consider and decide important issues, it is more important than in the individual case that the opinion should be made up only after mature consideration and that it should be freed, as far as possible, from the sway of passion or prejudice.

But let us return a moment to the difficulty of ascertaining public opinion, which is the guide that must ultimately control in all governmental matters.

I have spoken of the difference between public opinion and public clamor, and how careful we should be not to mistake the one for the other. We saw, too, that the newspapers were not always safe guides to follow, for while they reflect public opinion, they reflect public clamor also, and frequently confuse the two, and perhaps while I have been speaking some of you have been wondering what test I would lay down by which you might easily and infallibly distinguish the genuine from the spurious. But if such were your expectations, I fear I shall be forced to disappoint them. There are no empirical tests which you can apply, any more than formulas for success in life, or rules for the certain attainment of happiness. Problems such as we are dealing with today are too wide and too far-reaching to be solved in this summary fashion. Yet some solution I must indicate, and if you ask me what that solution is, I answer: in education, in the realization of the ideal for which this institution stands. The political salvation of our country today depends upon the leadership of our educated men and women—upon the men and women who have been trained to do their own thinking, and who have been well grounded in the history of their country and in the philosophy of its institutions. The essential part of such education is a thorough understanding of our national history, and an intelligent attachment to the ideals and principles upon which our government is founded.

You will observe that I include women among those upon whom rest political responsibilities. The fact that women have not generally been granted the suffrage does not absolve them

from this public duty. The depositing of a ballot in a ballot-box is but an insignificant part of the duties of American citizenship. The creating and fostering of intelligent public opinion is an incomparably more important matter, and one in which women may be quite as influential as men, and I have sometimes thought that if those women who have striven to secure the right to vote had but turned their labors toward the formation of a public opinion in furtherance of the aims which they expect to reach through suffrage, they would have accomplished, and will accomplish in the future, much more than could be gained by the mere privilege of voting.

It is not going too far to say that the stability attained by our government thus far has been due in no small measure to the fact that in supreme crises, men of responsibility have stood their ground and have done their duty in spite of the clamorous outcry of the multitude and the revilings of an excited press. The men of whom this may be said did their noble part in making and directing sound public opinion. They did not, with "ears to the ground," listen for voices that would lead them to popularity. Rather, having conscientious convictions in regard to the course they would pursue, they declared and maintained that course against all clamor and opposition, and thus proved that in a popular government based upon public opinion, statesmen of the noblest patriotism may exist, and that such a government does not necessarily reduce all men in public life to the level of timeserving politicians. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that there is a type of man in public life, of small intellectual caliber and narrow outlook, who seeks to advance his selfish interests by flattering deference to every passing whim of what he considers "the majority." This is the type of man that has led the best informed of our foreign critics to remark:

"In America the *practical* statesman is apt to be timid in advocacy as well as infertile in suggestion. He seems to be always listening for the popular voice, always afraid to commit himself to a view which may turn out unpopular. * * *

It has been observed that all the subduing power of the popular voice may tell against the appearance of great statesmen, by dwarfing aspiring individualities by teaching men to discover and obey the tendencies of their age rather than to rise above them and direct them."

"If this happens in America," continues our critic, "it is not because the American people fails to appreciate and follow and exalt such eminent men as fortune bestows upon it. It has great capacity for loyalty, even for hero-worship."

In support of this view he cites instances where the American people has followed with devotion its great men, saying:

"A kind of dictatorship was yielded to Abraham Lincoln, whose memory is cherished almost like that of Washington himself."

It is indeed one of the most hopeful and reassuring signs of our national career that our great presidents have been men who have had to a marked degree the ability to distinguish between public clamor and true public opinion. Washington had this ability in a large measure, and Lincoln, it would seem, had it in even greater measure. To my mind, there is no more striking contrast in American history than that presented by the lives and characters of our two greatest statesmen. Yet in at least one important particular their resemblance was notable: they were both too great in inherent nobility of character meanly to surrender to a clamorous press, or to follow in the wake of a passion-stirred populace. Yet of no two men in all our history can it be so indisputably affirmed that they more truly represented the enlightened public opinion of their times.

You will recall that this government had not long been founded when a situation arose that was fraught with the gravest consequences, and which if it had not been promptly and wisely met might have jeopardized the very existence of the Republic. In 1793 war broke out between France and England, and threatened to involve the United States. All

over this country public sentiment was running high in favor of France, and the reasons were obvious. Our country was still smarting from the wounds inflicted by England during the War of Independence. It was almost ten years since Sir Guy Carlton and his English troopers had sailed away, and yet England contemptuously refused to make a treaty with us. Her troops held our frontier forts, our citizens were still unpaid for the slaves and property she had carried off, her ports were closed to our ships, and she was even seeking to drive our flag from the seas. On the other hand, there was France, our generous ally, to whom we were bound by ties of gratitude and by formal treaties. Had she not been the first to recognize our independence? In the dark days of our struggle had she not given us generously of her aid? Had she not sent us ships and troops and money, and helped us in many ways? And now the hour of her struggle was at hand and she turned to us whom she had so generously befriended, and asked if she might use our ports in which to fit out her privateers. What was our answer to be?

This was the situation as it presented itself to the public generally and to the press. From all over the country went up the impulsive cry: "Let us help France, who was so generous to us." But Washington, with patriotic and clear vision, said, "No, we must not take sides in this quarrel; we must remain neutral and treat the French and English alike." Then the storm burst. From every side Washington was assailed with criticism. He was stigmatized as disloyal to a friend, traitorous to an ally, and unfaithful to his trust. For the moment he seemed to stand alone. He was denounced in the streets, from the rostrum, in the public prints. His house was surrounded by the multitude from day to day, huzzaing, demanding war against England, cursing Washington, and crying for success to the French. But Washington was not to be swerved from his purpose. He stood firm against the four winds. He suffered, and suffered keenly, but he remained true to his trust in spite of public clamor and in the face of strong public dis-

approval. And history has vindicated him. Even the public opinion of his day approved of his action; but this public opinion could not make itself heard until public clamor had subsided and reason had asserted itself. That Washington succeeded in steering clear of the rocks is not to be attributed to the fact that there were no false lights displayed to lure him from his course; for of false lights and of darkened counsel there shall never be a lack.

Of Lincoln's administration this was especially true, and the situation was further complicated by the fact that many of his friends and official advisers, whose honesty was beyond question, openly opposed him because their view of the great issues involved was less comprehensive than his. Scarcely a week passed but deputations representing thousands of his countrymen waited upon him to urge him to change his policy so as to make it conform to their views. When it became evident that Lincoln would not permit honest, though misinformed and partial, public sentiment to dictate to him, his policy, his motives were fiercely attacked. "No man," remarks Joseph Choate, "was ever made the subject of such unwarranted abuse, vilification and ridicule as Abraham Lincoln." And all this at a time when he stood most in need of sympathetic and intelligent support. The attack seemed to culminate when one of the ablest and most influential men of his time suddenly turned against him and smote him with cruel injustice. This man was no other than Horace Greeley, an old friend of the President, the editor of the powerful New York *Tribune* and a tremendous force in the shaping and directing of public opinion. At this distance of time it is difficult, if not impossible, for us adequately to realize the widespread sensation that was caused when in the summer of 1862, Horace Greeley addressed to President Lincoln his famous *Prayer of Twenty Millions of People*. It was a move of national significance, and it involved issues of more than passing moment. This "Prayer," which purported to give voice to the sentiment of twenty millions of loyal citizens, practically charged Lincoln with having been

unfaithful to the great trust reposed in him, with having failed to execute the laws of the land, and with having paid a "mistaken deference to rebel slavery." It was a cruel and unjust criticism, but it was written in the telling style of one of the greatest journalists of his age, and it had behind it the tremendous power and prestige of a great name and a great personality. It was a protest that might well cause even the greatest to hesitate, nay, even to falter; but Greeley, able as he was, had not taken the true measure of the man with whom he was dealing. Lincoln, without hesitation, composed his answer and issued it in the form of that memorable *Reply to Horace Greeley*, which, in its grave dignity, its unconscious pathos, and its noble severity, stands apart in the history of epistolary literature. And the nation saw that the man whose tender heart could not refuse the widow's prayer to spare her soldier son who was condemned to be shot for desertion, could turn a deaf ear to the prayer of "Twenty Millions" when that prayer clashed with what Lincoln felt to be his duty.

While but few have the opportunity of rendering to the nation the invaluable and patriotic service which was rendered by Lincoln or Washington, yet every enlightened and patriotic citizen may aid the community in which he lives to reach a sane and reasonable public opinion, and after all, it is the units of individual citizenship which collectively make up the nation and control its destinies. I need not again emphasize the tremendous importance to the community and to the nation of a sound and informed public opinion. I have tried to make clear to you the difference between public opinion and public clamor, a distinction which is of the first importance, but one which, unfortunately, is rarely made. Public opinion, in the sense in which I have used the term, is not the first hasty impression that springs from ill-considered or insufficient data, but is rather the sober second thought of a community, formed after deliberate and thorough consideration of the questions at issue. It follows from this that times of great public excitement, when passion and prejudice control, are not the times

conducive to the formation of sound public opinion. It is at just such times, however, that the educated men and women of this country can render their most important public services. They should not lend their influence or their support to the alarmists or the sensationalists of the hour; nor, on the other hand, should they stand passively aside and leave the multitude to its own guidance. The first course is contemptible, the second worse than unpatriotic.

It has been said that the educated citizen should be the antidote to the demagogue. The demagogue we have always with us, but he is powerless to deceive or mislead the educated man. He has never, it may be said truthfully, been successful for any length of time in misleading even the mass of the people. It is the demonstration of every crisis that the great majority is sound at heart, that it is willing and eager to do what is right. In every instance where it has for the moment failed, the fault may be traced to misinformation or to misplaced faith in unworthy leadership.

The duty of the educated man is here plainly indicated. It is nothing less than to meet situations as they arise, with the information and the courage with which knowledge and training have equipped him. It is always the duty of intelligence to guide the steps of ignorance, and only the shirk or the coward among educated men will stand back when times and conditions call for sound counsels. There are, I know, those who maintain that, in a country where majorities rule, the voice of enlightened judgment is lost in the clamors of ignorance and prejudice. To such I would say that their observation of social movements is at fault, and they have read history to little purpose. The record of American life does not justify a low estimate of the popular capacity to respond to the higher appeal. The trimmer and the timeserving politician always adopt such low estimate, and so long as they can deceive the public they may achieve a limited and temporary success, but the end is always the same. Failure overtakes them in their short career, and oblivion marks them for her own. Our great leaders,

from the day of Samuel Adams until this day, have always been men who have had the courage of their convictions, and who, for those convictions, have had to face public opposition, oftentimes vilification and abuse. Often they stood alone, and the recognition their hearts yearned for was denied them. But they strove for something higher than popularity, and today they stand on the heights, while the timeserver and the trimmer are forgotten, or remembered only with contempt.

I have just been referring to our great political leaders, but what I have said concerning them applies with equal force to the great leaders of journalism. In journalism, as in politics, we have the inspiration of noble traditions and the stimulus of great names and high ideals. If journalism today does not universally occupy the high place it might, it has only itself to blame. Newspapers, in many instances, have misused their great power; they have employed the arts of the demagogue to gain subscribers, just as a certain type of politician employs such arts to win votes. I do not mean to imply that this is true of newspapers generally, any more than it is true of politicians generally. Our country affords many notable instances to the contrary. Here, in this State, there is published a newspaper which has long sustained with signal ability and prestige the higher traditions of journalism, a newspaper whose name has become a synonym for moral and intellectual force, one whose opinions and judgments are accorded serious consideration by thinking people at home and abroad. Such a journal is truly a precious possession, a thing to be valued as among the powers making for right and justice among men.

It has been said of the profession of teaching that it may be either "the sorriest of trades or the noblest of professions." This dictum is markedly true of journalism. And it seems to me that the political hope of the present century, the first decade of which is now drawing to a close, is very closely bound up with the winning of the press to higher and distinguished from lower standards of judgment, and to a nobler development of wisdom and courage. I am not without hope that the great

powers of the press for good or evil will, as time goes on, inspire in it an enlarged sense of responsibility, give it a new birth of devotion to the higher purposes of life. I hold in mental vision, as among the possibilities of a not remote future, a press so provided on the side of its necessities, so lifted above ordinary business considerations, that it may sit in judgment of passing events, inspired only by the true spirit of justice. I have in conception a journalism exalted above considerations of financial gain. Society has found the means to establish a limited group of civilizing and ennobling agencies—notably the church, the library, the art gallery, the college—in a sphere above necessities and motives which dominate the workaday world. I see no reason why our journalism should not be sustained by the same methods of endowment which have so notably been applied in this country to other educational agencies. I have no thought of creating a journalism different from the best journalism of our time, only to remove any bias of opinion or motive which may come through strife for financial gain. I venture to suggest that the press in its higher and ultimate development must have a place in this limited company of beneficent things, sustained and cherished for its highest powers, above influences tending to demoralization of judgment and courage. Surely, as time goes on, men must see that the great—I had almost said the supreme—powers of the press should be freed from financial necessities which tend to prejudice and to bias. I present to you this conception of a definitely and securely independent press as among ideals worth cherishing in connection with the evolutionary march of social organization toward higher standards of responsibility.

But my main purpose today is not so much to dwell upon the duties of our public officials, or the responsibilities of our journalists, as to call your attention to the duties and responsibilities which you, as educated men and women, owe to your state and to the nation at large. Our government has already entered upon a stage in its development when “shirt-sleeves diplomacy” and “shirt-sleeves legislation” will no longer

suffice. The problems, both foreign and domestic, that now confront us are many of them intricate and complex in the extreme. They are problems which for their proper solution call for the judgment of the trained specialist. The first hasty impression of the man in the street will not do. It is therefore incumbent upon you to do all you can, both by precept and example, to discourage hasty and ill-considered action in matters pertaining to the public welfare. Unfortunately, the tendency of certain recent innovations in our governmental machinery makes strongly against the deliberation that is so essential to sound legislation. These innovations proceed upon the assumption that no particular training or skill is necessary to enact good laws, that the opinion of the man in the street is every bit as valuable as the opinion of the experienced statesman, and that where a man's intentions are vaguely good, neither knowledge nor judgment is necessary for his guidance. Imagine what would happen if we attempted to conduct a large business upon such a theory; yet the government has frequently to deal with issues that are far more intricate than those that ordinarily arise in private business. Not only this, but involved questions that require cool and dispassionate consideration may be suddenly precipitated into the political arena—perhaps at a time of great public excitement—and an immediate solution demanded. The resulting legislation may reflect the public temper of the moment, but it runs little chance of reflecting true public opinion—*the deliberate and reasoned judgment of the community*. The latest of these governmental innovations, *The Recall*, is directly opposed to the principle of representative government. It tends to breed a type of public man who always has his ear to the ground, a man who has no opinions or convictions of his own, and whose one aim is to keep in office by turning himself into a political weathercock, adjusted to catch every passing gust of popular caprice. This is not the kind of man from whom the country has anything to hope. He has no fixed standards of right or wrong, but will always be found on the side of what he believes

to be the majority; if the ratio of numbers should change overnight, his allegiance will change with them, and the morning will find him fighting on the side of that cause which he opposed the day before.

I have already spoken of that provision of law which prescribes stated times for the holding of elections. Under such provision, elections are always preceded by adequate campaigns of discussion, and such period for discussion can always be sufficient to clear away the confusion that may exist from want of full information, or temporary passion or excitement. Now one of many objections to the *Recall* is that it nullifies this advantage. Under its workings, elections may be brought on upon short notice, and at times when the popular mind is least calm, least informed, least capable of judgment. It is calculated not to reserve political action to the mood of calm counsels and sober judgment, but to precipitate it upon the hour of passion and clamor. Furthermore, if it be said that the Recall is necessary to get rid of corrupt officials, who by some mischance may have been foisted upon the public, it need only be answered that, in this respect, society is sufficiently protected under our laws of impeachment.

These are only a few of the many mischiefs possible, even inevitable, under the Recall scheme. A moment's reflection will show how dangerous a weapon it must be in the hands of a disgruntled and unscrupulous minority, for it may as easily be invoked against good men as against bad men. It is a certain and persistent menace to independence of thought and integrity of action, at the same time holding no terrors for the conscienceless and shifty timeserver more intent upon commanding himself to popularity and upon holding his office than upon doing his duty in the face of possible misapprehension and prejudice. Who that is acquainted with the spirit and the discontent of the time can doubt that if the Recall had been in force during the administration of George Washington, that even he, the Father of his Country, would have been called to account for his stand for neutrality in the war between England

and France, and summarily removed from the presidency? And who familiar with the incidents of Lincoln's administration and of the confused state of the public mind in connection with them, can doubt that this, the noblest of all the figures of the last generation of Americans, would likewise have been dismissed from his post of duty by the distempered recklessness of a passionate and passing hour? Those who urge these innovations may say that it is not proposed to apply the Recall to national affairs, only to state and municipal affairs. My answer is that crises of public aberration and passion occur more frequently in the municipality and in the state than in the nation; and for this reason the Recall principle is all the more vicious in its application to state and municipal affairs.

I have spoken especially of the Recall because in my judgment this proposal stands for an idea in radical and fundamental conflict with the scheme of representative government as it has come down to us from the Fathers. But the Recall is only one of a group of proposals offered to the American people in the name of reform, and under that impulse which impels many to seek short cuts to political perfection. Taken in their entirety, these proposals suggest changes that would not only nullify the representative principle but destroy the government which has grown up under it. That government is now almost a century and a quarter old. It has borne us successfully through amazing changes of material and social conditions. It has enabled us to weather the storms of one of the greatest civil conflicts the world has ever known. It has challenged not only the admiration of the world, but has enforced imitation more or less marked wherever civilized races of men abide. It still serves our purposes, still distinguishes us among the nations of the earth. Nobody claims for our Constitution the merit of utopian completeness, but wise men see that it has not yet reached the limits of its possibilities, nor attained the full measure of what it holds of social and political advantage. The advancing years have made manifest its working efficiency; the strains of time and circumstance have disclosed in it unex-

pected sources of strength. Gladstone's characterization of it as "the greatest work ever struck off at any one time by the mind and purpose of man" remains as true today as when it was spoken.

As rational men and women you must recognize that perfection is not to be looked for in human institutions. No general rule of society was ever yet framed, however salutary in the main, that would not work hardship in particular cases, and no political institution will ever be devised through human ingenuity that will not exhibit defects in the course of its operations. And while this knowledge ought not to deter us from laboring incessantly for the betterment of our laws and institutions, it should guard us against the danger of revolutionary changes. Almost invariably such proposals are found to be false lights, with new colors, perhaps, but not essentially dissimilar from those which precipitancy or quackery are forever holding before the eyes of discontent and credulity.

It is not difficult to account for the attention which well-meaning but uncritical people give to loudly heralded short cuts to political perfection. That there are those who turn to the support of every new suggestion, earnestly and even in the face of repeated disappointment, is a mark of that aspiration which pervades the American character. But aspiration—even moral aspiration—uninstructed by knowledge, unregulated by judgment, may in the sphere of constructive politics work infinite mischief. Those who proceed under its impulses, greedily clutching at everything that offers or appears to offer relief from the shortcomings of our system, may be compared to the man in the crowd who offers his money for a patent nostrum that may mask the symptoms of his disease even while augmenting its real virulence.

Observation has convinced me that those who lightly propose modifications in the fundamental structures of our government have no true comprehension of the force and meaning of their proposals. Those who so ardently urge these revolutionary modifications do not understand that they would

surely nullify and destroy representative government. They do not stop to consider—in the limitations of their knowledge they do not understand—that the principle of pure democracy, which they would substitute for the representative principle, is a thing filched from the scrap-heap of past times and discredited systems, a device many times used and as often discarded as wanting in the elements essential to a permanent or stable government.

It is for you to whom I speak today, educated men and women, to examine all proposals of political change, in the light of knowledge and under the guidance of judgment, and to appraise each at its true value. It is for you to recognize and to expose the fallacies which too often lie in novelty and pretension, to caution and restrain those who would rush blindly into the field of political experimentation, to instruct the uninformed and the thoughtless that our Constitution affords in itself the best and surest means of constructive and wholesome change. It is for you to insist that such changes as we make shall harmonize with and sustain the integrity of our political fabric. In brief, it is for you, educated men and women, to guard our system against the proposals of a reckless innovation which would cheapen it to a scheme of inconsistencies, and which would debase our noble Constitution to a thing of shreds and patches.

I am sure that I make no mistake when I appeal with confidence to men and women of instructed and trained minds, when I appeal to conscience allied with intelligence, on the score of its high and special responsibilities, to cherish that which has come down to us from the Fathers of the Republic, that which has sustained us in a progress unparalleled in the records of mankind.

1257 7

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below

B
UPL OCT 17 1980

10-283

REC'D LD-URL

FEB 25 1996

Form L-9
25m-2, '43(5205)

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES
LIBRARY

University Of California Los Angeles



L 007 360 499 3

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 821 043 7

